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Abstract:

REDUCING VEHICLE IDLING IN VERMONT: A COMMUNITY BASED STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & INTERVENTION PLAN

Decreasing idling has important human health, environmental and economic benefits. But regulatory approaches designed to reduce idling haven't changed individual behavior. This presentation describes an alternative approach to automobile idling reduction: using community-based social marketing to achieve a community-wide sustainability goal. It revolves around the idea that initiatives promoting behavioral changes are most effective when they involve direct contact with people. Promoters identify the activity to be promoted and the barriers to this activity, and then design a strategy to overcome these barriers applying psychological knowledge about behavioral change. For the purposes of this report, we chose Richmond, Vermont as our example town. In each community chosen, overall strategies would remain consistent but be individually tailored based on community direction and collaborations. These cannot be top-down campaigns but will require extensive community buy in and collaboration to be successful. The plan is based on a review of successful efforts in northern communities, existing efforts in Vermont, the experience of other Vermont organizations in promoting energy efficiency, and discussions with community leaders and Vermont citizens. The proposed intervention campaign involves a multifaceted approach that seeks to reach potential idlers through a variety of mediums, at different points in their lives, and through several official and unofficial power brokers in the community. Unlike many information-intensive campaigns, community-based social marketing has been shown to have a much greater probability of promoting sustainable behavior.